

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 32

Introduced by Assembly Member Honda

March 23, 1999

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 32—Relative to the Japanese YWCA in San Francisco.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 32, as introduced, Honda. The Japanese YWCA in San Francisco.

This measure would declare the Legislature's support for actions to eradicate any vestiges of the racism of the California Alien Land Law that was repealed in 1956, and would request the Attorney General to take steps to ensure the enforcement of charitable trusts created during the lifespan of that law.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, The California Alien Land Law was
2 enacted in 1913 in an atmosphere of racial prejudice and
3 barred Japanese immigrants and their charitable and
4 religious organizations from owning real property; and

5 WHEREAS, In response to the California Alien Land
6 Law, Japanese Americans legally entered into trust
7 agreements with non-Japanese to hold their property in
8 another's name so they might establish their roots in this
9 country and build a stable and lasting community; and

10 WHEREAS, Japanese immigrant women of the Soko
11 Bukai, an association of Japanese Christian churches in

1 San Francisco, established a Japanese YWCA in that city
2 in 1912 to work with Japanese women and girls; and

3 WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA policy in the
4 early 1900's forbade Japanese and other minority women
5 and girls from living in their residence halls, and this
6 discriminatory policy was adopted, enforced, and
7 periodically reaffirmed by the San Francisco YWCA; and

8 WHEREAS, The Japanese YWCA, in response to this
9 discriminatory policy, undertook a fundraising campaign
10 to purchase a building that would serve as a residence hall
11 for Japanese women and girls; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1920–21, the Japanese YWCA raised the
13 funds to purchase the building and property, with the San
14 Francisco YWCA Board agreeing to hold this property in
15 trust for the permanent use of the Japanese YWCA; and

16 WHEREAS, Ten years later, noted architect Julia
17 Morgan donated her services to design a new Japanese
18 YWCA building as a tribute to the architectural heritage
19 of Japan; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1932, the Japanese YWCA celebrated
21 the opening of its building at 1830 Sutter Street in San
22 Francisco and continuously and exclusively occupied,
23 controlled, and provided services to Japanese women and
24 girls from that building; and

25 WHEREAS, Programs and services of the Japanese
26 YWCA were abruptly ended in 1942 when Executive
27 Order Number 9066 forcibly removed all Japanese
28 Americans from the West Coast to inland concentration
29 camps; and

30 WHEREAS, The Japanese YWCA leased the building
31 during the internment years to the American Friends
32 Service Committee, which provided services to Japanese
33 American internees; and

34 WHEREAS, Institutional memory of the trust
35 agreement was lost during the four years of internment
36 and the years that followed, with the Japanese YWCA
37 never regaining control of their building; and

38 WHEREAS, The Japanese YWCA building is the only
39 surviving prewar building constructed through the
40 efforts, dedication, and vision of Japanese immigrant



1 women and is their legacy to the Japanese American
2 community; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1996 the San Francisco YWCA
4 threatened the existence of the Japanese YWCA building
5 by attempting to sell the property at its highest
6 commercial value and by rejecting the Japanese
7 American community's request that the San Francisco
8 YWCA honor the trust established by the Issei women
9 and accept the Japanese American community's good
10 faith offer to purchase the Japanese YWCA property to
11 preserve it for community service; and

12 WHEREAS, The Soko Bukai, whose Issei women
13 members founded the Japanese YWCA, today reasserts
14 the Japanese American community's claim to the
15 Japanese YWCA building; and

16 WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA steadfastly
17 disavows the existence of the trust agreement with the
18 Japanese YWCA in spite of the minutes of the San
19 Francisco YWCA Board of Directors from the 1920's and
20 1930's which document that agreement; and

21 WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA refuses to
22 acknowledge any legal or moral obligations to the
23 Japanese American community and has taken overt
24 actions to prevent any enforcement of the trust
25 agreement; and

26 WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA's refusal to
27 honor the trust agreement and fulfill its duties as trustee
28 allows the YWCA to profit from the racism of the
29 California Alien Land Law; and

30 WHEREAS, The actions by the San Francisco YWCA
31 are in direct contradiction to the YWCA's official
32 imperative "to seek the elimination of racism wherever
33 it exists and by any means necessary"; and

34 WHEREAS, The California Alien Land Law was ruled
35 unconstitutional in 1952 and repealed by the California
36 Legislature in 1956; now, therefore, be it

37 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the*
38 *Senate thereof concurring,* That the Legislature of the
39 State of California supports actions to eradicate any
40 vestiges of the racism of the California Alien Land Law

1 and requests the Attorney General to take steps to ensure
2 the enforcement of charitable trusts created during the
3 lifespan of the California Alien Land Law; and be it
4 further

5 *Resolved*, That the Legislature pays tribute to the
6 contributions, tenacity, and vision of the Issei women
7 pioneers of the State of California; and be it further

8 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly
9 transmit copies of this resolution to the Governor of the
10 State of California.

